



Cheryl Ann Programs News Review

SUMMER 2018

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Summer is a Time to Explore Options

Summer Transition Helps Teens Think About Life as Adults

This summer, with the sun high in the sky, groups of teens from Cheryl Ann Programs have been crisscrossing the county, exploring work opportunities, learning about themselves and others, and having fun.

The summer program is an effort by Cheryl Ann Programs to introduce 14- to 17-year-olds to the larger world they'll encounter once they graduate from high school.

Karen Leugers coordinates the program for Cheryl Ann. A former educator with the Mercer County Educational Service Center, she says she's in her element working with teenagers.

"This is my favorite age group—I love it," she said. "They're just fun. We talk about real-life things, real-life skills that you need to have to be able to hold a job and to get along with other people."

Those skills are woven into a summer's worth of activities for two age groups, the 14- and 15-year-olds, and the 16- and 17-year-olds. Throughout the summer, "we work on social skills like taking care of yourself and making friends," Leugers said. "We're not teaching the subjects that a

typical teacher might teach, like reading and writing, but these things are important all the same. Things like trying new things, and being brave when you're put into a new situation."

With the assistance of Audrey Barhorst, program participants got behind-the-scenes tours of a retail clothing store, a fast-food restaurant and a grocery store. They volunteered at the Mercer County Council on Aging, helping to set up for a garage sale. They worked with tools as they built planters and they helped out with a landscaping crew.

Through all those experiences and more, Leugers and Barhorst worked with the students on what are called soft skills: people skills, communication skills, social skills and other traits and tools that will help them get along in life.

"At the end of every day, we talk about things like appropriate dress for each situation, and how they interacted with each other and with their hosts," Leugers said. "You can see from the beginning of the summer to the end of the summer how much they've grown through these activities."

Cheryl Ann Superintendent Shawn Thieman said that the program is an important bridge
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Above, Karen Leugers helps Cody with a carpentry project as part of the summer program. Below, Rudy on a visit to the Celina fire department.

See more summer program pictures on our Facebook page!

Levy Generates 25 Percent of Annual Budget

Cheryl Ann Levy Renewal to Appear on Ballot

I am continually reminded of how fortunate we are to live in Mercer County, Ohio. The weather this summer has been beautiful for lawns and fields alike. Outdoor activities are in full swing and it is great to hear all of the stories generated by the individuals we serve. Many have attended summer festivals



Cheryl Ann Superintendent Shawn Thieman

and talk about their successes at the cake wheels and bingo. Some have gone to Cincinnati ballgames and even Eldora Speedway. There have been excursions to

vacation spots and summer camps for our school children. As always—the summers in Ohio seem to pass by much too quickly.

As we look to prepare for the fall of 2018, one item of importance for Cheryl Ann is our need to renew a 1.94-mill levy in November. When passed, the levy will continue to generate approximately \$1.3 million per year—representing 25 percent of Cheryl Ann's annual budget. The levy would cost taxpayers \$32.84 per \$100,000 of home valuation and would not increase taxes.

Cheryl Ann serves individuals from birth and throughout their life. Currently, we serve about 500 individuals with developmental disabilities or delays per year. 175

of these individuals are under 3 years old and served by our “Help Me Grow” and Early Intervention Staff. 100 are school-aged children and are served by SSA's and other transition support staff. 200 are adults and receive in-home supports, day services, employment services and transportation. These individuals are connected to over 15 service provider agencies in the community (which, as you'll see on the next page, we're continuing to feature in our newsletter).

The bulk of Cheryl Ann's budget goes directly to services for the individuals and families we serve. We use local levy funds to pay 40 percent of all Medicaid services and we constantly strive to stretch our dollars while maximizing the choices available to individuals. We currently serve 150 individuals using Medicaid dollars, and our local Medicaid match cost is about \$1.4 million per year.

Mercer County is unique in the way we handle services for those with developmental disabilities. We believe in self-determination, allowing individuals to have greater control over the services they receive and who provides those services. For those not receiving Medicaid services, the Board provides local funds from \$1,000 to \$5,000 annually.

We hear great comments from our families and the public all the time. Some say that while they never imagined they would need us, they are grateful that we are there. We are so thankful to the citizens of Mercer County who support our efforts to promote a better community for all residents. Everyone deserves to have the opportunity to live, learn, play and work in the community—regardless of their abilities.

Summer is a Time to Explore

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between a student's school years and the work and activities that will come after school, in his or her adult life. “We hope that these experiences will connect them to resources out in the community and will help them see what jobs are out there when it's time for them to look for work that they enjoy,” he said. “These are students that will soon be transitioning to adulthood and we hope this program will help them get where they want to go.”

One of the last scheduled activities was a trip to Barhorst's family dairy farm. It was a great day, Leugers said. “A lot of these kids have never been on a farm. They got to see all the equipment, see how cows are milked, and looked into a bulk tank full of milk. They were amazed that this is what ends up on their cereal in the

morning,” Leugers said. “Audrey did a phenomenal job of showing them what farm life is all about. It was great for the kids to see her in a different light.”

Leugers also thanked the businesses and people who welcomed groups of young people over the summer. “I have to say, our community is phenomenal in allowing our kids to have these experiences each summer,” she said. “I have never had anyone say no.”

During the school year, Leugers acts as a liaison between the Mercer County Board of DD and local school boards, parents and teachers. It's a different way for her to help some of the same students.

“It's great work,” she said. “I hear it a million times over: ‘You must be a special person to do this job.’ It always makes me smile because I get so much more out of it than the kids do.”

CRSI Helps People “Get More Out of Life”

When Joy Conner is asked to describe her job, she has it down to two words: life coach.

She does a lot for the clients she helps through her job as a support specialist with Champaign Residential Services, Inc. (CRSI). She provides whatever help they need to get through the day, including cleaning, cooking and personal care.

But she sees herself more as someone who helps her clients have the life they want. “I think of what I do as being a life coach. I help people learn daily living skills so they can get more out of life,” she said.

CRSI, which is based in Urbana, Ohio, is one of the largest providers in the state, covering 17 counties in Ohio. Conner found her job by answering an ad in the

paper. “I knew (providing care for people with developmental disabilities) was something I always wanted to do,” she said.

On a typical work day, Conner stops by the two houses that are currently her responsibility. “I check and see if they need groceries, if they need refills on their medications, if they need to go to the bank. I go over their mail with them and we pay the bills,” she said. “Then we make plans for dinner. We’ll go out, or sometimes we pick up movies and watch

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Joy Conner

ISS Gets People Involved in their Community

There’s a certain kind of person who fits the bill as a direct service professional at Innovative Support Services (ISS), according to its regional director, Mindy Stephens:



Mindy Stephens

“You have to be a special kind of person. Passionate, patient, and with a big heart.”

That’s because ISS staff members are an important part of the lives of the people they are hired to help. “I tell everybody that we hire, you have to go in and do the work that you’d want done if you were in the individual’s shoes,” Stephens said. “ISS helps individuals with disabilities in

their homes. We do everything for them that you’d do for yourself: helping with hygiene, cooking, cleaning. We’re also community-oriented, so we like to get people out and involved with their community. We seek out volunteer opportunities for them, because we feel it’s also our job to find acceptance for them out in the community. We talk with the individuals to find out their interests and what they might like to try. People might want to join the church choir, or visit an animal shelter.”

The main office of ISS is in Kansas, Ohio (between Fostoria and Fremont) and serves Mercer, Auglaize and other area counties. It’s challenging to keep track of what’s going on in all those homes, each as unique as the
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Independence is Goal for Balanced Care

When Cindy Kinninger stopped by the Cheryl Ann facility to talk with us about her agency, Balanced Care, she brought one of her clients, Katie Homan, along with her.

That’s not unusual; the two are together often, and have been for nine years, as Kinninger works with Katie to give her the life she wants.

Balanced Care, with its home office in Columbus, is a provider that serves consumers in Mercer County as well as Franklin County. Kinninger is the director of the agency in Mercer County, where she oversees staff members who provide assistance at two homes.

“Our goal is to coordinate a well-trained staff that assists our consumers to strive to the best of their abilities to become independent in their community,” she said.

That’s a personal mission for Kinninger as well, as she provides hands-on care for Katie and others. “A typical day for Katie and me is we get her a shower and help her get dressed, we do our shopping, we bake, we make
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Provider Profiles • 2018

Throughout the year we’re highlighting local providers and their services. We hope this will help our readers learn more about the network of care that’s available for people with developmental disabilities.

Balanced

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supper for the other people in the house, and we all eat together. We're a family," Kinninger said.

Kinninger devotes part of her day to managing other Bal-

CRSI

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them at home."

The chores are typical, but the people are individuals with their own wants and needs, Conner said. "The joy comes from helping people maintain their independence. We have goal lists, and we work toward them, because gaining new skills and having new experiences is important for all of us," she said. "Each person is so different and their needs are so different—I'm always trying to figure out what I need to do to help them."

anced Care staff members in their work. "I hire employees, keep employee records, keep up on the latest requirements in documentation, schedule staff and make sure they're trained."

ISS

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person who lives inside. "You never know what each day will bring. I try to make a daily agenda, but nine times out of ten, the day does not go that way! It keeps life interesting," Stephens said.

Another priority is to help individuals achieve as much as possible in their homes, with the help of ISS staff. "We want people to be able to do as much as they possibly can do. The goal is to help people be as independent as they possibly can," Stephens said.

She also tries to offer encouragement to the staff, because the work's not always easy. "I have such a good staff; we all work together," she said. "We all want to pitch in; it's amazing."



Cindy Kinninger of Balanced Care, with Katie Homan

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